

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Lower Elementary (2-4)

Most of these books are designed for independent reading, though it may be helpful to photocopy a given chapter (a two page spread) for a small guided reading group or for the whole class. This method would allow students to explore popular questions that come up in class discussion in greater depth. Certainly some of these books will be helpful to teachers who are unfamiliar with skyscraper construction and need an easy primer on the topic.

► SKY BOYS

Deborah Hopkinson and James Ransome
Schwartz & Wade, ISBN: 978-0375836107

- **ABOUT:** Filled with bright pictures on the building of the Empire State Building, *Sky Boys* tells the story of a young boy who watches the construction of the Empire State Building with great interest because his father is on the crew. Told in the second person, this book is easy to read, and yet deals with some of the difficult themes of the era, including joblessness. The text offers opportunity for fact recall and basic notetaking. Ask students to simply remember one fact as you read aloud, or take notes on the types of jobs, numbers of materials, or other interesting facts.
- **YOU SHOULD KNOW:** This book refers to the number of jobless men in the 1930s, but does not explain the Depression.
- **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:**
 - Write word problems based on the numerical facts given
 - Act out the four-person job of riveting the steel (heater, catcher, bucket-up, gunman)
 - Illustrate the construction of the Empire State Building in sequence from foundation to completion
 - Brainstorm a list of all the jobs that were created by the construction project (payroll, bookkeeper, supervisors, lunch chefs, water boys, etc.)

► JOE AND THE SKYSCRAPER

Deitrich Neumann
Prestel Publishing, ISBN: 978-3791321035

- **ABOUT:** This text is written from the first-person perspective of Joe, a young man employed in carrying water to workers on the Empire State Building site. Though text heavy, students will be engaged in the text because of Joe's age and his unusual form of employment.
- **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:**
 - Small group guided reading
 - Write a short paragraph about the job you would have liked at the construction site
 - Write a "blog" from the perspective of Joe or another of the workers

► HARD HAT AREA

Susan L. Roth

Bloomsbury Children's Books, ISBN: 978-1-5823-4946-6

- **ABOUT:** This text balances a simple storyline with facts and terms about ironworking. In it, an apprentice ironworker walks to all of the various parts of a skyscraper construction site in order to take breakfast orders, and in doing so the readers are introduced to each job on the site and the tools it requires. This book is based on a real ironworking apprentice and an actual visit to a skyscraper, and is best used with small groups or independent study.
- **STUDENT ACTIVITIES:** The final page of the book has a built-in activity, asking the reader to identify each of the workers on the page and recall what they do. Frankly, this will be a bit much for most students after an initial read. Alternatively, you can invite students to practice note-taking skills by writing down each job and facts about it as the book is read. (Read the book twice, and have students take notes on the second read, as on the New York State ELA test.) Then, assign each student one job, and have them write a first-person paragraph explaining the job and what it is like to work high up on a construction site.

► SKY DANCERS

Connie Ann Kirk

Lee & Low Books, ISBN: 978-1584301622

- **ABOUT:** *Sky Dancers* is told from the perspective of a young Mohawk boy who has never been to the big city, and follows his father's work on the construction with an intense interest that reflects the excitement felt by many at the time of the building's construction. This brightly-illustrated book provides a unique perspective on the Empire State Building because it highlights the role of Native American steelworkers in its construction.
- **YOU SHOULD KNOW:** The book contains a couple of historical inaccuracies, but nothing a young student would catch.
- **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** Students may, independently or as a class, fill out a Venn diagram highlighting the similarities and differences between life in Manhattan and life on the Mohawk reservation. Because of the narrator's sensory experience and interesting descriptions of seeing New York City for the first time, this book provides an opportunity for teaching adjectives or figurative language. You may also want to plot character development or characterization with your students, moving the boy from his initial thoughts about his dad being away on the construction site to his feelings after witnessing his father at work high up in the air.



► IGGY PECK, ARCHITECT

Andrea Beaty

Abrams Books, ISBN: 978-0-8109-1106-2

- **ABOUT:** The rhyming text of this story immediately lends it to a class read aloud; the fantastic illustrations in this story only reinforce that notion. Young Iggy Peck seems to have an innate need to build fabulous structures from any and all materials: he recreates the St. Louis Arch from pancakes, castles from chalk. This book highlights the conceptual role of the architect in the creation of a building. Use with Lesson 2: Designing a Skyscraper.
- **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** This book is well-suited to a review of simple literary features (plot, conflict, characterization, etc.). Likewise, a review of rhyming words and poetic rhythm would also fit well with this text. Simply handing out graph paper and rulers and letting students try their hands at creating some exciting buildings of their own, with the illustrations as inspiration, would also be fun. With more preparation time, a teacher may choose to use some of the illustrations as springboards for social studies exploration.

► TAR BEACH

Faith Ringgold

Dragonfly Books, ISBN: 978-0517885444

- **ABOUT:** In this classic story, a young girl named Cassie flies above the buildings in her neighborhood in her imagination, introducing young students to the idea of a bird's-eye (aerial) view.
- **DISCUSSION POINTS:** Tie building elements such as fire escapes and ventilation systems to skyscraper studies. Discuss other innovations (such as elevators, cranes, and water pumps) that have allowed for the creation of bigger and taller buildings.
- **STUDENT ACTIVITIES:** Using the illustrations in the text, have students draw their own aerial views of their neighborhood, school, apartment building, or a favorite skyscraper. Supplement with images available at www.skyscraper.org/viva.

► THE LITTLE SKYSCRAPER

Scott Santoro

Price Stern Sloan, ISBN: 978-0843176773

- **ABOUT:** This coming-of-age story about a boy and his favorite building details the boy's career as an architect and his fight to preserve this building as a historic landmark. This book is good to use with Lesson 4: Changes in a City Over Time.
- **STUDENT ACTIVITIES:** Students may write a brief journal response about a favorite building, or draw a picture of a building they would like to see landmarked. Student drawings could be assembled into an all-class skyline.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

grade level: upper elementary (4-6)

theskyscrapermuseum
tools for teaching

▶ THE MYSTERY IN NEW YORK CITY

Carol Marsh

Gallopade International, ISBN: 978-0635020994

- **ABOUT:** This book will appeal to a variety of learning modalities. It is written like a novel in which a couple of kids travel to New York. However, in the style of popular authors such as Ellen Raskin, the characters are given a mystery and use puzzles and codes--in combination with historical facts--to solve it.
- **LEARNING ACTIVITIES:** Students may be encouraged to create their own puzzles based on their learning. They may also enjoy writing short mysteries set in their own New York City neighborhood, creating a puzzle-based scavenger hunt of the school building or neighborhood for a classmate to solve. Students who are less intrigued by puzzles may enjoy making a map to show the progress of the characters in the story.

▶ EMPIRE STATE BUILDING: WHEN NEW YORK REACHED FOR THE SKIES

Elizabeth Mann

Mikaya Press, ISBN: 978-1931414067

- **ABOUT:** This very readable reference tool is ideal for students who are learning the elements of a nonfiction book. It tells the story of the building in narrative form, with original illustrations and photographs. It also includes an index, a brief glossary, a page of fast facts, a short bibliography, and an index.
- **LEARNING ACTIVITIES:** This is a great guided reading choice, especially for exploring how to use the reference elements at the book's conclusion. However, simply gleaning facts together from one section will likely engage your guided reading group. You may also choose to copy a portion of the book for small groups in your class, asking them to read it and put together a short presentation or skit on what they learned.

▶ USING MATH TO BUILD A SKYSCRAPER

Hilary Koll, Steve Mills, and William Baker

Gareth Stevens Publishing, ISBN:978-0-8368-6771-8

- **ABOUT:** This small book combines facts and charts about skyscrapers with math activities designed for students to tackle on their own, without adult assistance. The book deals mostly with basic math, including number sense problems, area and perimeter calculations, calendar work, and estimation. The image quality is great, but the pages can be a little crowded.
- **LEARNING ACTIVITIES:** If your class of fourth or fifth (or savvy third) graders is preparing for the New York State Math Exam, this will be a helpful text. Photocopy individual spreads and put into manilla folders for easy time-filler activities, centers work, or independent work time.

► SKYSCRAPERS

Chris Oxlade

Heinemann Library, ISBN: 978-1-5757-2278-8

- ABOUT: This non-fiction book (complete with a glossary and index) features large print and simple, clear writing that makes it more friendly to students who might have a difficult time with technical texts. The chapter breakdowns are logical, and the illustrations are big and colorful. This book will be a helpful resource to students and to teachers with minimal knowledge of skyscrapers.
- LEARNING ACTIVITIES: As with other upper-elementary books on this list, this book is best used as an independent reading selection. Teachers may find it helpful to use a specific chapter with a small group of students in guided reading, or as an article in a science lesson. By doing so, students will be able to explore skyscraper-related questions in greater depth.

► SKYSCRAPERS: INSIDE AND OUT

Leonard M. Joseph

Power Plus Books, ISBN: 978-0-8239-6109-2

- ABOUT: This reference book about skyscrapers around the world is written in short, accessible chapters and is well-illustrated. It provides extensive explanations for many aspects of a skyscraper's construction, including the laying of foundations, elevator planning, frame construction, and many others. This book is of interest because of its focus on buildings outside the United States. A great deal of attention is paid to East Asian skyscrapers, especially notable and unusual structures in China and Malaysia. This book is a great choice for advanced or self-motivated students, and also serves as a skyscraper primer for teachers.
- LEARNING ACTIVITIES: Though this book may be best used as an independent reading selection, teachers may find it helpful to photocopy a given chapter (a two page spread) for a small guided reading group or for the whole class. This would allow students to explore popular questions that come up in class discussion in greater depth.